to upgrade and add value to its product so as to attract more customers and increase its market share.

(b) Indian Airlines' rules for sale and revalidation of tickets, are in line with practices followed by other airlines. The Duty Managers are authorized to extend or revalidate tickets on request from passengers, on merits and in line with the delegation of powers vested in the officers. Any complaint of indifferent or negative attitude by any officer is investigated and action taken for remedial measures.

(c) and (d) In order to provide customer friendly commercial services, Indian Airlines has been focusing on training its employees especially the front-line staff who come in direct contact with the travelling public. Customer Care Service Programmes, as well as refresher courses, are conducted on a regular basis to develop their skills and fashion their behavioural aspects towards services rendered to passengers.

Besides, Indian Airlines has initiated various steps and schemes for the benefit of customers which include :-

— Quick dissemination of information through Indian Airlines' Website, Flight Information Cells, Inter-active Voice Response System etc.

— Departure Control System to facilitate Advance Seat Reservation, Telephone Check-in and Return Check-in.

— Improvement in Cabin interiors

— Various marketing initiatives to cope up with the competitive environment.

Imposition of tax on free passes on airline employees

4644. MISS MABEL REBELLO :
SHRI B.J. PANDA :

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have imposed a tax on free passes of all airline employees; if so, what are the details of this tax;

(b) whether all airlines staff had staged a bandh to press for withdrawal of this tax; and

(c) how Government propose to tackle this issue ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK) : (a) By the 22nd Amendment to the Income Tax Rules 1961, the Government of India had amended Rule 3(6) whereby, the value of free and concessional passages provided by an undertaking involved in transportation of passengers would be valued at the rate at which the same is offered to the public. Thus, it could be implied that the free passages of all Airline employees would come under the purview of Rule 3(6) of the Income Tax Act 1961 relating to valuation of perquisites.

(b) and (c) A National Action Committee consisting of various Unions/ Associations/Guilds of airlines had given a notice to go on one day token strike from 0600 hours of 20 February, 2003 to 0600 hours on 21 February, 2003 to protest against Income Tax on free/concessional passages utilised by Airline employees. The proposed strike was subsequently called off following an assurance from the Ministry of Finance that the matter has been favourably considered.

Concession to senior citizens on foreign travel

†4645. SHRI HARISH RAWAT : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are considering to give some concession in air fares to the senior citizens for going abroad in Indian aeroplanes; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK) : (a) and (b) Air India had introduced a promotional Senior Citizen fares approximately 25% lower than the prevailing market fare, on India-London-New York and India-Europe sectors during the off-peak season *viz.* mid September to mid December, 2002. This promotional fare was reintroduced for outbound travel effective 15th February, 2003 to 31st March, 2003. Indian Airlines offers 50% discount on the normal economy class fare to Senior Citizens on domestic sectors only.

IA's advertisement policy

4646. SHRI S.S. CHANDRAN : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) the policy followed by Indian Airlines with regard to advertisements;

(b) whether it is a fact that the Indian Airlines ads are shown on FTV; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.